

ABLE TO DELIVER

Men are sinful. In fact, it is not possible for the sinner not to sin. They are bound to sin. They are slaves to sin, and so must do sin's bidding. They are sinful through and through. Every constituent of a man: his mind, his emotions, and his will; all are corrupted by sin. He is so sinful that he denies that he is so. He may admit mistakes. He may even confess that he now and again commits a sin. He tells himself that he is not so bad, especially when compared to either men. He certainly does not believe that he is a slave to sin. He is like the drug addict who denies he is addicted, who believes that he can quit any time. Men are sinful, and they cannot save themselves. They cannot atone for their sins, and they cannot free themselves from sin's bondage. It takes a work of God to make sinful men face facts, to make them admit their sinfulness. It takes a work of God to atone for their sins, and to free them from slavery to sin. Man cannot save Himself, But God is mighty to save, and every man ought to put his trust in Him.

In the days of the Divided Monarchy, the Babylonian army conquered the southern kingdom of Judah, and carried them away to Babylon. During the Babylonian Captivity, King Nebuchadnezzar ordered an idol to be made, and all his subjects to bow down before the idol, and to worship it. If anyone would not bow down, then that one would be thrown into a fiery furnace. Three Hebrew men, known by their Babylonian names, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, refused the king's order. The king told them that, if they did not comply, then they would be cast into the furnace. The king then defied God, telling the three men that their God was unable to save them. The men told the king that God certainly was able to save them, and that they believed He would do so. They said that, even if God chose not to save them, they would not bow down before the idol. The three men were thrown into the fire, but they were unharmed, and there appeared with them a fourth man, whom the king said looked like the Son of God. The king called the three men out of the fire. The king, when he saw that the men were not in any way hurt, blessed God for powerfully delivering them, and he issued a decree threatening death to anyone who would speak against God. Moreover, he promoted the men to a higher position in the kingdom.

Jesus, on one occasion in His earthly ministry, told certain Jews who believed in him, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31, 32) The Jews He addressed believe in Him, but He warned them about temporary faith. He told them that the true test of faith is its continuance, its consistency, its perseverance. Those who continue to follow Jesus are the ones who know the truth and are set free from bondage to sin. The Jews answered him by asserting that they are children of Abraham, and had never been enslaved to anyone. They were descendants of Abraham; freeborn men, and heirs of the promise. The Jews whom Jesus addressed misunderstood Him. They thought he spoke in political terms, but He rather spoke in spiritual ones. Jesus explained to them that anyone who sins is a slave of sin, and, if he would be right with God, then he needs spiritual deliverance. The slave of a house is not family, and can be turned out if he behaves unseemly. A son is family, and he loves and serves his father in his house; so he will never be turned out. So it is with God's house: slaves of sin are cast out, but sons of righteousness remain and inherit the promises. The Jews, because they would not be delivered by the Son of God, would remain slaves, and would not be sons and heirs, and so would be cast out. Ishmael was a true son of Abraham, but, as he was the son of a slave woman, he was turned out. The Jews, although Abraham's descendants, were slaves of sin under the law, and they would, so long as they held to the law of Moses, and not to Christ, remain slaves, and be cast out, and not inherit the promise. If they would but join themselves to the Son of God, then He would free them from the bondage of the law, from the law of sin and death, and they would be made sons along with Him, and so heirs of the promise. The Jews whom Jesus addressed were

physical descendents of Abraham, and so Abraham was their physical father; yet, God was not their spiritual father, but rather the devil was. So, they did not truly believe in Jesus, but rather wished to kill Him. Jesus told them that, if God were their spiritual father, then they would do the righteous deeds of Abraham, whose spiritual father was God by faith. The Jews said that they were not born of fornication; which is to say, they were not born of idolatry, but had God alone as their Father. Jesus said that, if God were really their Father, then they would love Jesus, because He is the Son of God whom God sent into the world to deliver men from sin, death, and hell. Those who understand Jesus, and love Him, have as their fathers both Abraham and God; they are the ones whom God has delivered bondage to sin, and from the fires of hell that are sins reward.

Let us understand the sinfulness of men. Let us understand the power of God to save. Let us love the Lord Jesus, and hear His Word.

Now unto the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.